

# THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 35, NO. 3 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY FALL 2015

...to foster a greater knowledge of birds and to promote conservation of all natural resources

FOUNDED 1952



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P.O. BOX 1325, DAUPHIN ISLAND, AL 36528-1325

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**H**I FRIENDS! I HOPE YOUR SUMMER has gone well. Ours has, the most eventful thing being Rufina's retirement the first of this month. It has been a hot one in northern Alabama, not only during the day but quite muggy at night, too. We've been busy in a variety of ways, especially in late May and early June, with some house repairs/renovations and breeding bird survey work. We had the opportunity to do some breeding bird points in the Sipsey Wilderness, which was a wonderful experience; got to see some beautiful spots we had not seen before (along with lots of exercise).

Our fall meeting this year will be October 9-11 at the Dauphin Island United Methodist Church (DI-UMC). We are going to be able to hold almost all of our indoor activities there, including registration and potluck/slide show on Friday, board meeting and banquet on Saturday and as a meeting place for most or all of our field trips. Wilton's will cater the banquet for us again, which I am sure you are glad to hear. As most of you know, our arrangements with the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL) for AOS meetings have ended by mutual agreement. DISL is no longer able to guarantee our reservations of the Shelby Center for our banquet, which must be made well in advance for planning purposes. Additionally, this fall, even Galathea Hall will be closed for renovations and, thus, not available. We tried hard to find a solution, but to no avail. However, let's hope DI-UMC is the solution to our need for a permanent venue for all of our activities on the island. Detailed meeting arrangement information is on the AOS website and elsewhere in *The Yellowhammer*. I would like to express my thanks to Anne Miller and Maureen Shaffer for their diligent efforts in finding us a suitable venue for our meeting on the island.

Our banquet speaker will be Jon Dunn, who has served as chief consultant for five editions of the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* and is co-author of the current 6th edition (see elsewhere in the *The Yellowhammer* for more detail on Jon). As most of you know, the National Geographic field guide is among the very best, if not the best, we have for North American birds. In addition to his presentation



Jon is going to lead an informal discussion on bird taxonomy during our meeting and will accompany us on at least three of our field trips. Jon has been with us before and, although I was not there, I have heard only rave reviews; I am really looking forward to meeting and birding with him.

A couple of things should be mentioned that will be different for the upcoming meeting. The Stowers will not be providing lunch on Saturday for AOS attendees, as they will be off the island at that time. The discussion on bird taxonomy is planned for part of that time (see elsewhere for details on location and time). Additionally, we may have two DI field trips to the same

areas (our traditional "hotspot" field trip to Shell Mounds, etc.) at different times on Saturday morning, if the number of attendees is too large for one trip. There are some additional details in the *The Yellowhammer* concerning this arrangement, including an opportunity to reserve a time for the earlier or later trip in advance, should we need both.

Also, it's worth mentioning that it's election time again this fall, as you will be selecting a new group of officers (see below) for the next couple of years. Our elections are typically not very time-consuming, and will be at the banquet. This meeting will, of course, be the last for our current AOS officers, including myself, David Pylant (VP), Rufina Ward (treasurer), Pat Reed (secretary) and Bianca Allen (immediate past president). I think I speak for all of us in being honored to have served you and AOS over the past couple of years. We are very appreciative of all the help, in such important ways, from board members and others, in meeting arrangements and setups, leading field trips, providing lunch (thanks Jennie and John), overseeing, guiding and supporting AOS efforts in conservation, education, website/Facebook management, membership recruitment, etc., keeping our publications vibrant and informative, stepping in as needed when problems arose, your generosity in support of important causes (a good example being the recent crisis with Forever Wild funding), and just being around to share in the fellowship that is birding and naturizing.

Our winter meeting in January will be at Lakepoint State Park near Eufaula; the speaker has not yet been decided. This is one of our regular venues for the winter meeting that



rotates around every 2-3 years. Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge is nearby and a great birding area. More details will be available at the next meeting and later in the fall.

Finally, I want to take the opportunity to remind any members who may have forgotten and allowed their memberships to lapse to please consider renewing, as we'd love to have you back. It's not hard to forget, especially for those who don't regularly attend AOS meetings. The date in the upper right of the mailing label on your *The Yellowhammer* indicates when your membership expires. AOS memberships automatically expire at the end of the calendar year (unless you have a lifetime or sustaining membership).

Thanks for your support and wishing y'all health, happiness and great birding.

## *The Prince of Collectors, Teddy Roosevelt, and a Local Connection*

By ROBERT A. DUNCAN

**I**N THE 19TH CENTURY ORNITHOLOGISTS RELIED ON the gun to study birds. There were no field guides with descriptive drawings, and no lightweight, fine optics and cameras like those with which we pursue our passion. Instead, ornithologists lugged cumbersome shotguns around to collect birds to be studied. These specimens were prepared and preserved in both private and public collections. In fact, it was these specimens that enabled writers and artists to produce the first field guides. Birds had to be collected and studied in hand. So, in the 19th century, bird collectors roamed the world obtaining specimens for scientific study and museums.

One such man was George K. Cherrie, an Iowan who became an assistant curator of the Chicago Field Museum. Finding museum work rather boring, he set out to collect birds in the new world, collecting for the Chicago Field Museum, the Rothschilds, and the British and American Museums of Natural History. Cherrie made forty expeditions to South America and his wanderings there are reminiscent of the adventures of Indiana Jones. He killed two men—one of his porters in Peru in a dispute over wages, and in the process was shot in the

arm, taken to a hospital in Lima, and was told by doctors he would not survive. He did, and so did his arm. He spent some time in a Peruvian jail. Once back in the field, he caught a thief one night stealing his equipment, and shot him dead. He was let off by the local police because they thought the victim deserved it. His reputation and volume of specimens earned him the title from noted ornithologist Frank Chapman as "Prince of the Tropical American Bird Collectors."

In 1913, the Brazilian explorer Rondon invited Theodore Roosevelt to join him on an expedition to find the source of the River of Doubt. Having just lost the election, Teddy jumped at the opportunity and asked Cherrie to go along because of his extensive experience in the jungles of South America. The expedition ran in to considerable difficulties, took 48 days, ran out of food and other supplies. Teddy slipped in a stream, gashed his leg, ran high fevers and wanted to be left behind, but was not. The group were rescued, and Cherrie was given considerable credit for saving the expedition.

And now, a local connection to George K. Cherrie!

In 1880, Gulf Breeze was known as Town Point. It was not given the present name until after the bridge was built in 1933. There were only two houses extant in Town Point in 1897, both Duncan homestead houses. One was located near where the foot of the bridge is, and the other near the end of Town Point Road, now known as Fairpoint Drive. At that time, the road was but a sandy trail forged by Andrew Jackson years earlier.

In Francis M. Weston's *Birdlife of Northwestern Florida*, there is a reference to four now-extinct Bachman's Warblers collected by George K. Cherrie in March 1897 on Town Point in Florida. The specimens are deposited in the Chicago Field Museum. The "Prince of Tropical American Bird Collectors" probably stayed with Duncan ancestors since they were the only folks living here then, and the extinct Bachman's Warbler flew in our skies.

### *Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions*

Winter 2015	November 10, 2015
Spring 2015	February 10, 2016
Summer 2016	May 10, 2016

# A Big Day to Remember

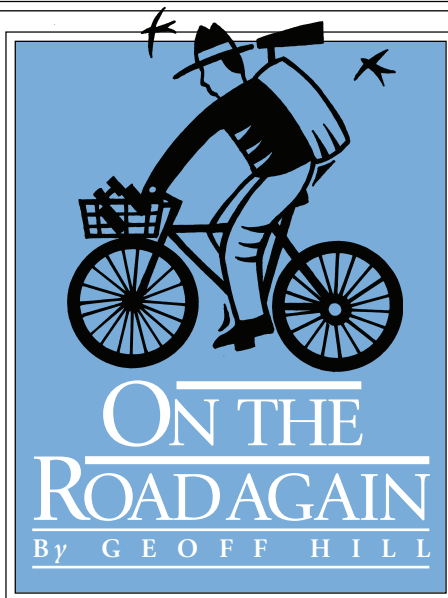


ALABAMA MAY HAVE THE longest-standing, essentially unchallenged big day of any state in the U.S.

On April 24, 1983, Dwight Cooley and Mark Brown tallied a mind-blowing 202 species in Mobile and Baldwin counties. I think that the magnitude of this mark has only been fully appreciated as decade after decade has passed with no big day team coming close to toppling the mark. In 1991, Greg Jackson, Bob Duncan, Bill Bremser, and Phil Tetlow attempted an inland to coastal big day and managed 181 species. That is the closest anyone has come to the unassailable Cooley-Brown big day record. Other big day attempts fall off into the 170s and 160s. On April 26, 2015 Barry Fleming, David Carr, and I decided to climb into the batting cage and take our best cut at the record.

Since moving to Alabama in 1993, I've been doing small-scale birding big days within the state during Christmas bird counts and various spring counts. I had never attempted a statewide big day, but I had been thinking about this particular big day route for a long time. My plan was to start at Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge and nearby forest reserves in extreme east Alabama for upland and freshwater birds in the morning and then to drive to Dauphin Island in the extreme southwest corner of the state for coastal and estuarine birds and trans-Gulf migrants in the afternoon and evening. The geographic scope of the big day—stretching along about 330 miles of highway—was daunting. But, knowing the Eufaula/east Alabama area really well, I knew we would get many species that we could not get near the coast. On the previous weekend I ran a practice big day starting at Dauphin Island and ending in east Alabama (not even making it to Eufaula before dark!) and totalling only 143 species. That practice day convinced me that this route had to be run north to south to get the most birds.

I proposed the idea to my friend since boyhood, Dave Carr, who is now a professor at the University of Virginia. Dave was



in. Both of us have lived for expeditions and challenges since we were kids. I then asked Barry Fleming, long-time Alabama birder and fellow Auburn professor and Eric Soehren who I've known since he was a master's student at Jacksonville State University and who is now a senior biologist with Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and a longtime Alabama birder and bander. Barry was in but Eric couldn't get away in the middle of the night for the full day. He would join us around 11 a.m. and do half of the day with us. So, Barry, Dave and I agreed to rendezvous at 2 a.m. on April 26 at Dave's motel

in Auburn to make a run at the four-decade-old record.

We got off to an inauspicious start. On my way down College Avenue at 1:45 a.m., I heard a Common Nighthawk at the traditional spot on the Auburn campus. I continued down the street, picked up Barry and Dave, and swung back up the half mile of College Avenue to the nighthawk spot expecting an easy tick. Instead we got silence. We waited. We drove around the area with the windows open. We begged the birding gods. The nighthawk wouldn't *peent*, and we ended up missing that bird for the day. While we were dodging intoxicated college students on Auburn's campus listening for the nighthawk, however, we heard an American Robin, which turned out to be our only robin of the day. He who taketh giveth back.

We then spent the next 2.5 hours in fruitless pursuit of night birds. The inauspiciousness of our start was growing. We went to a stakeout for an Eastern Whip-poor-will, and not only missed the whip, but all other night birds. We rolled into Eufaula at 4:30 a.m., feeling a bit depressed with only a Barred Owl to show for our hours of playing hoots and trills. But as the predawn glow rose over Eufaula, the night birds started to sing. We got several Chuck-will's-widow, Eastern Screech-owl, Great Horned Owl, and Virginia Rail in quick succession. King Rails, which are common breeders on the refuge, eluded us, and we missed that species for the day;

nevertheless, we were feeling better about our night birds. The day rose to fantastic clear calm weather and a fine parade of birds. While we were listening to and seeing Least Bittern, an incredible 4 American Bitterns flew past us. This was no flock of 4—it was four birds over a 30 minutes period, each seemingly a totally independent event. I've been birding Eufaula for 22 years, and these are the first American Bitterns that I've ever seen in flight except the few that I've flushed. Ibis were everywhere—over 50 White Ibis and 8 Glossy Ibis. White Ibis are rare at Eufaula but Glossy Ibis are simply unknown. We would get both species again, ten hours later, at Blakeley Island, making two of the harder species on the list oddly trivial on this day. We had singing Sedge Wren and White-crowned Sparrow, both unexpected, and we found a Hairy Woodpecker, a really tough species for this route. We got the great majority of target species for Eufaula and a nice list of unexpected birds.

We followed up Eufaula with a fantastic stop at a private quail plantation near Hurtsboro. This tract is a relocation site for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (RCW) and we went to an active nest tree, which we located using our superior birding and woodsman skills (and by looking for the tree with foil wrapped around its base). As we pulled in, I heard an RCW about 200 feet from the nest tree. Barry and Dave didn't hear it, but no big deal. They would just watch it fly to the nest tree. Unfortunately, it turned out that the bird I heard was moving away from the cavity, and the wait for the birds to return drug out past 30 minutes. This might be a good place to mention that, on a big day, I am the taskmaster, the keeper of the time. I had carefully worked out an agenda and allotted a specific time for each stop. We had half a state to cover and every stop was critical. Getting 30 minutes off schedule would mean skipping the migrant trap, salt marsh or beach at the end of the day and all of those options were unacceptable. So, I spent the day exclaiming, "time to go" and herding the team into the car.

This 30-minute wait for one bird had me staring at my watch and calculating lost birds at the end of the route. It wasn't wasted time though. As we waited for the RCW we got our only Wild Turkey, Sharp-shinned Hawk, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Northern Flicker of the day. Finally, I told Barry and Dave, "Woodpecker or no woodpecker, we're leaving in two minutes." Ninety seconds after I drew my timeline in the sand, two RCWs flew in and we were off again.

Tuskegee National Forest is a treasure trove of breeding forest birds, but we had done so well with warblers and other

woodland birds, that by the time we got to Tuskegee we had only three primary targets left: Swainson's Warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, and Hooded Merganser. We dipped on the merganser but easily got the other two. Our quick trip to Tuskegee allowed us to make up 20 minutes, and we were off again.

The next stop was to pick up our half-day participant, Eric. Our route took us right past Eric's house in Shorter, so with the efficiency of an Indy pit crew, we picked up Eric and sped south. The long drive from Shorter to Mobile was mostly birdless. We did manage to see a few Broad-winged Hawks but that was it for big-day listers. We got to Blakeley Island with about 130 species and a lot of easy birds yet to pluck. This is not a banner year for Blakeley Island. The best shorebird ponds have too much water and shorebirds are generally scarce. But we did get some key species—Long-billed Dowitcher, Western Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, both yellowlegs, and Yellow-crowned Night Heron. While we were watching the night heron, a Merlin flew in and landed in the shallow water. In our big day frenzy, however, we were disappointed. We had already seen a Merlin in the morning and found ourselves mumbling—"why couldn't you have been a kestrel or a peregrine?" Big days are not about spectacular wildlife events; they are about ticks on a checklist. And one tick we missed at Blakeley Island was Black-bellied Whistling Duck—a species that had been seen in recent years by everyone who visited the area and that seemed unmissable. Big days teach you that virtually no bird is unmissable.

After a quick, dangerous, and highly productive two minute stop on the bridge to Dauphin Island looking at the flats at the end of Little Dauphin Island, at 4 p.m. we pulled into the parking lot of the primary migrant trap in the state—the Shell Mounds. This is a tiny half-acre of protected woodland that draws any migrant woodland birds that put down on the island. Birds tend to "fall out" on Dauphin Island only when faced with north winds or storms, so on many days, Dauphin Island and the Shell Mounds hold few birds. You can usually judge whether it is a good migrant day or not from the postures and faces of the folks standing in the parking area when you pull in. Smiles and lots of binoculars pointed up is a good sign. Scowls and binoculars hanging unused is not. What I saw on the faces of the birders leaving the Shell Mounds did not give me reason for optimism. "Forty-five minutes and we're out" I called as we stepped onto the trail of oyster shells. And then the dam broke. In succession we all started to call out

birds "black-throated green, chestnut-sided, what is that... bay-breasted! There's an oriole—Baltimore Oriole. Scarlet Tanager...oh lots of them." The birds were coming almost too fast to get everyone on each new species. We got warbler after warbler and then the thrushes started. "Gray-cheeked" Eric called and then "Veery...Swainson's...and that's a Wood Thrush." We stayed together and we each saw each species except Barry had missed black-and-white in the first frenzy of new species. We looped around to relocate the black-and-white and easily found it. While we were looking at the warbler, I started focusing on the vireo singing over our heads and smiled. It was a very atypical Red-eyed Vireo song, giving a distinctive two-note repeat at the end. I knew that song well from recent trips to the Florida Keys—Black-whiskered Vireo. I asked everyone to listen. No one else knew Black-whiskered song but they all agreed it was a weird vireo song. So I got out my iPhone and quietly (so as not to disturb either the bird or other birders) played the Black-whiskered Vireo song. There was no doubt about the ID. We tried to see it, but it was hopeless. A sound ID is as good as a visual ID, and it was time to move. A check of Fort Gaines and the airport got us nothing new but a calling Clapper Rail and then we pulled into our last stop—the public beach parking lot and a long walk on Pelican Island.

The beach was emptying fast this Sunday evening with everyone filing past us on his or her way out. While Blakeley Island has declined in shorebird habitat with high water this spring, Pelican Island remains fantastic. The huge pool closest to the parking lot is great habitat and it is big enough that birds can move away from people without leaving the pool. We instantly got the unmissable species like Dunlin and Sanderling and then as we walked the beach, goodies started to present themselves—Reddish Egret, Snowy Plover, Piping Plover, Red Knot (in full breeding plumage), Northern Gannet, Sandwich Tern. About a mile into the walk, Eric spotted a Baird's Sandpiper, a great find in the spring. Our list was now bulging and the possibility of new birds was fading with the daylight. One bird that we had missed on this day and that I had missed on the entire previous weekend on Dauphin Island was American Oystercatcher. Given the lateness of the hour, it seemed that we had missed it again. But, as we came around a sand dune near the very end of the island a pair of oystercatchers greeted us.

Now we had only the tip of the island to check out, and we were elated to see a flock of 43 American Avocets in full breed-

ing plumage sleeping on the beach. There were lots of terns on the tip and out on a couple of sand spits in the Gulf there was a prodigious number of Brown Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, and Laughing Gulls. I don't know if anyone in our group tried to count them, but it was certainly many hundreds of birds. With our last strength we started to go through the terns right in front of us, and we quickly picked out several Common Terns for our last birds of the day.

The sun had set behind a band of gray clouds and as we limped back to the car we started to discuss our total. We had last tried to tally before the wave of migrants washed over us at the Shell Mounds, and we had been at about 150 at that time. We had ticked a lot of species since then and no one knew for sure where we were. We each guessed our total. Barry and I thought low 180s; Dave and Eric thought high 170s. The answer we knew, lay with a glass of beer at Barnacle Bill's Seafood Restaurant when we could fill in the checklist and tally up.

The total put a smile on our faces and gave us a reason for a toast—182 species that Barry, Dave, and I had all detected. In addition, I had seen a Song Sparrow at Eufaula that I couldn't get Barry and Dave on and I had heard Common Nighthawk before I had picked Barry and Dave up and the big day started. The nighthawk could not be part of the big day totals since it was detected before we started our big day, but on reading the big day rules, I realized that the Song Sparrow could count. It had been seen when we were birding together and I had made a concerted effort to show it to Barry and Dave. So the big day ended at 183 species.

Our fun and productive big day really underscores just how daunting the Cooley-Brown big day record is. I think that we could run our Eufaula to Dauphin Island route for the next 20 years and never surpass the Cooley/Brown record. We had perfect weather, good birds in the north with few misses, a warbler and thrush fallout at the Shell Mounds and great shorebirds on Pelican Island. We certainly missed some "easy" birds like King Rail, Belted Kingfisher, Anhinga, and Black-bellied Whistling Duck, but we also got many unexpected birds like Great Black-backed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Green-winged Teal, and White-breasted Nuthatch. I don't see 20 more species being added to this route. The answer is probably a Baldwin Co/Mobile County route with more birding and less driving. I'm already thinking about the possibilities. My next personal goal is 190. From 190, 203 may not look so impossible. For now, hats off to Dwight and Mark.

JANUARY 1, 2015 - JUNE 30, 2015

# 2015 AOS Financial Report

By RUFINA WARD, *Treasurer*

BEGINNING BALANCE: January 1, 2015 \$13,860.16

## Income

Membership Dues	3,306.00
Spring Meeting Registration	3,125.00
Banquet	2,197.00
DIBS Donation	701.00
Holliman Scholarship Fund Donation	200.00
Other (DISL Refund, U of A royalty)	129.31
Proceeds from CD	311.92

TOTAL INCOME \$9,970.23

## Expenses

TekLinks, Inc.	150.00
Joe Wheeler State Park	713.51
DIBS	701.00
Holliman Scholars	2,000.00
Hartford	425.00
Staples	56.11
Herald Quick Print	176.28
Pelican Reef Restaurant	1,897.05
Travel Refund (R. Borthwick)	280.58
(L. Zemaitis)	956.42
Member Refund	161.95
	25.00
Lakepoint State Park	100.00
BBVA Image	30.00
AOS returned check (student member)	10.00

TOTAL EXPENSES \$8,342.57

ENDING BALANCE: June 30, 2015 \$10,472.15

## Members Needed—Uncle Larry Wants a Few Good People

PEOPLE IN ALABAMA LOVE BIRDS. YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE TO GO outside to see the evidence. On Facebook, the Birding Alabama site has been around for quite some time and has more than 1200 members. And there are many bird photos on various south Alabama nature sites.

Some of the people on these sites are already AOS members. Many are not. If they knew more about AOS, many of those who are not members would join. Our challenge is to find a way to lure people from these Facebook sites to the AOS Facebook site and AOS webpages—and, when they go there, to convince them that they should join. As membership chair, I am asking for ideas from you all on how to reach these potential members and also how to reach the younger generation who spend relatively little time on Facebook.

Please email your ideas to me—or to any other member of the Board. I also encourage you to invite people to join AOS; every word helps.

—Larry Gardella

## Electronic Yellowhammer?

IT COSTS WELL OVER A DOLLAR AND A HALF TO PRINT AND MAIL *The Yellowhammer*. We are delivering, on a totally voluntary basis, *The Yellowhammer* via the Internet. If you would like to receive your *Yellowhammer*, in color, electronically, as a PDF file, please email the editor at BobReed1987@gmail.com.

## Upcoming Meetings

SECOND FRIDAY—October 9-11, 2015

Fall Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

FOURTH FRIDAY—January 22-24, 2016

Winter Meeting, Lakepoint State Park, Eufaula

THIRD FRIDAY—April 15-17, 2016

Spring Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

SECOND FRIDAY—October 14-16, 2016

Fall Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama



A O S FALL MEETING, OCTOBER 9-11, 2015

## Meet the Speaker: Jon L. Dunn

JON DUNN started birding at age eight in his home in California. Jon has written many papers on the identification and distribution of North American birds and has written (with Kimball Garrett) *Birds of Southern California: Status and Distribution* (1981), *Warblers* (1997) and *Birding Essentials* (with Jonathan Alderfer, 2007). Jon has been chief consultant, or more recently author (with Jonathan Alderfer), of all six editions of the National Geographic's Field Guide to the Birds of North America beginning in 1983. Jon has served for some 27 years

on the California Bird Records Committee and over 15 years on the American Birding Association's Checklist Committee, some of which were as chair. Jon has served on the AOU's committee on taxonomy and nomenclature since 2000 and serves as a director to Western Field Ornithologists. Jon lives on the unpopulated east side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in Bishop, California, and hopes and trusts that the vaunted strong El Niño that exists will bring California much rain this winter. When not birding Jon enjoys reading history and listening to Leonard Cohen.

**I**F THERE IS A SINGLE FAMILY OF NORTH AMERICAN birds that could be ranked as one's favorite, wood warblers would probably be listed first. Nearly half of this large family of well over a hundred species occurs within the United States and Canada, and most are found in eastern North America. Moreover, most species are brightly colored, especially in their spring alternate plumage, and their appearance over much of the East after the cold winter and comparatively bleak avifauna, is always thrilling. The timing and routes for all of our eastern Neotropical migrants, including the wood warblers, varies. Some, especially those that winter in the West Indies or eastern South America, come up through Florida, while others come up through eastern Mexico and south Texas. With our eastern wood warblers, most are trans-Gulf migrants, meaning they cross the Gulf of Mexico from the Yucatan Peninsula. Dauphin Island, long known as one of the country's best migration spots, is located towards the eastern end of the trans-Gulf flyway.

In fall, the routes all shift a bit east, so circum-gulf (through south Texas) species that are quite rare in spring are more regular in fall. But this general route isn't absolute. Some species, like the Black-throated Blue Warbler, despite its West Indian wintering grounds, are slightly more regular on Dauphin Island in the fall. More predictably, Blackpoll Warblers, while regular in spring, are very rare in the fall. In general, those species that have a more northerly component to their breeding grounds, the boreal forest, arrive later in the spring than those species that breed farther south, including

Alabama's breeding wood warblers. Learning the various migration routes and which species fit with which and when they arrive and depart greatly improves one's birding skills. As Louis Pasteur famously once said, "chance favors the prepared mind."

Fall is a time when some wood warblers are more somberly colored than in spring. Hence identification can be more difficult. Still, with the exception of a few species, notably Bay-Breasted and Blackpoll Warblers, identification of fall wood warblers is straight forward. In fact, for most species there is little difference between spring and fall: the so-called "confusing fall warblers" is an overused misnomer, and sadly some folks are scared away from the prospect of looking for them. And, it is worth adding that our wood warblers are much, much easier to tell apart than the Old World Warblers (a non-related family) where wing formulas have to be relied on. In short, we have it easy on this side of the Atlantic!

Beyond the distribution and identification challenges, warblers have of late undergone great revision. What happened to that large genus *Dendroica*? Yes, the American Redstart really is the culprit of change. What is the "rule of priority" all about? Why is there only one species of *Oporornis*? And is the Yellow-breasted Chat really a wood warbler? These revisions have resulted from recent genetic work. More changes resulting from genetic studies are likely. The Yellow-breasted Chat is likely to be placed in its own monotypic family (like the Olive Warbler) adjacent to wood warblers.

Finally, in wood warblers, as with all families, there are important conservation issues to consider. Why are Golden-

winged and Cerulean Warblers declining while Kirtland's, once near extinction, has increased? And, what happened to the Bachman's Warbler, a species that has almost surely been extinct for over half a century.

Hopefully, the answers to many of these questions will be discussed and resolved during our time together in the field and elsewhere at Dauphin Island this fall.

—Jon L. Dunn

## Fall Meeting Field Trips

### *Friday morning*

Field Trip to Grand Bay with Jon Dunn

Trip Leaders: Anne G. Miller and Maureen Shaffer

Meeting Time: 7:00 a.m.

Meeting Place: Dauphin Island United Methodist  
Church Meeting Hall, 302 Key Street

Jon Dunn, AOS Keynote Speaker, will provide his expertise as we explore the agricultural fields and ponds around Grand Bay in Mobile County. These areas are known as a stopover for flocks of Whimbrels, a large shorebird noted for non-stop flights of up to 2,500 miles between their breeding grounds in the far north and their wintering grounds in Mexico and South America. Other likely species include Bald Eagle and Gull-billed Tern, and a variety of other land birds and water birds. On the return trip (around 11:30 a.m.), we will pick up lunch from Captain Frank's Barbecue Shack in Bayou La Batre (best barbecue in Mobile County) and picnic at the park on Coden Loop Road overlooking Mississippi Sound, where rows and rows of pilings provide perches for a variety of gulls and terns, as well as Brown Pelicans.

### *Saturday morning*

Field Trip: Exploring Dauphin Island with Jon Dunn

Trip Leader: Ken Ward with Jon Dunn

Meeting Time: 7:00 a.m.

Meeting Place: Dauphin Island United Methodist  
Church Meeting Hall, 302 Key Street

Explore the varied habitats of Dauphin Island with keynote speaker Jon Dunn. We'll bird along the beach and around Fort Gaines, the Shell Mounds, Audubon Bird Sanctuary, the airport, etc., concentrating on Neotropical migrants.

NOTE: At Jon Dunn's request, participation in this field trip will be limited to 30 people. You can register for the field trip when you register for the AOS Fall Meeting on Friday afternoon. In the event that more than 30 people sign up, a second field trip with Mr. Dunn will be offered at 10 a.m., and places in the two field trips will be determined by lottery. The results will be posted at the Dauphin Island United Methodist Church Meeting Hall by 6:00 p.m. Friday night.

Field Trip: Birds of Pelican Bay Peninsula

Trip Leader: Andrew Haffenden

Meeting Time: 7:00 a.m.

Meeting Place: Public Beach and Fishing Pier Parking Lot

Join DI resident and world nature travel specialist Andrew Haffenden to explore the birds along one of Dauphin Island's richest bird habitats, the shoreline of 'Pelican Bay Peninsula', formerly a separate island, and now a spit of land attached to Dauphin Island. Expect to see and learn about a variety of plovers and sandpipers, as well as wading birds such as Reddish Egrets, and a variety of gulls and terns.

### *Sunday morning*

Field Trip to Blakely Island Mud Lakes

Trip Leader: John Trent, Wildlife Biologist, Alabama

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Meeting Time: 7:00 a.m.

Meeting Place: Dauphin Island United Methodist  
Church Meeting Hall, 302 Key Street

The Blakely Island Mud Lakes are a complex of disposal ponds that host a wide array of shorebirds and waterfowl. We'll carpool to the site and walk the dirt road up the dike to view an amazing array of shorebirds, water birds, and raptors. Expect to see American Avocets, Black-necked Stilt, Stilt Sandpipers and a variety of other shorebirds, as well as Gull-billed Terns, Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, and raptors such as Mississippi Kites. Permits to visit this restricted site will be arranged for participants who sign up by Saturday, October 10.

## AOS FALL MEETING 2015

*Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Alabama, October 9-11, 2015*

### FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

- 7:00 a.m. Field Trip to Grand Bay—see page 10  
 3:00 p.m. Registration—DI-UMC Meeting Hall  
 6:00 p.m. Social Hour/Pot Luck—DI-UMC Meeting Hall  
 7:00 p.m. Holliman Award Student Presentation—  
 DI-UMC Meeting Hall  
 7:15 p.m. Members Slide Show—DI-UMC Meeting Hall

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

- 7:00 a.m. Field Trips—see page 10  
 11:30 a.m. Lunch, Islanders Restaurant, 1504 Bienville Blvd.  
 2:00 p.m. Board meeting—DI-UMC Meeting Hall  
 6:00 p.m. Open bar social—DI-UMC Meeting Hall  
 6:45 p.m. Banquet—DI-UMC Meeting Hall  
 7:45 p.m. Program—Jon L. Dunn

### SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11

- 7:00 a.m. Field Trip to Blakely Island—see page 10  
 12:00 p.m. Compilation—Goat Tree (Ann and Lynne's  
 yard across the street)

### ACCOMMODATIONS AND INFORMATION

#### Motels

Gulf Breeze and Harbor Lights Motel: (800) 286-0296

#### Rentals

Boardwalk Realty, Inc: (877) 861-3992  
 Dauphin Island Real Estate: (888) 707-6444  
 Tyson Real Estate: (251) 861-8312  
 Pickett Real Estate: (800) 861-3646  
 Island Real Estate: (877) 219-7392  
 ACP Real Estate, Inc.: (866) 861-3311

#### Websites

[www.gulfinfo.com](http://www.gulfinfo.com) and [www.dauphinisland.cc](http://www.dauphinisland.cc)

### FRIDAY NIGHT POT LUCK IS BACK!!!

Don't forget to bring your favorite appetizer, snack, dessert,  
 etc. for the social hour.

**NOTE:** Until further notice, spring and fall banquets are limited to the first 100 people.

## AOS FALL MEETING 2015 REGISTRATION FORM

*Complete and return to:*

Rufina Ward, 1689 Longleaf Drive NW, Huntsville, AL 35806

Telephone: (256) 837-5646 • E-mail: [phinken@wowway.com](mailto:phinken@wowway.com)

*Please make checks payable to AOS. Checks must be received by October 1, 2015*

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

**AOS DUES** Student: \$10 • Individual: \$25 • Family: \$40 • Sustaining: \$50  
 Life (individual): \$350 • Life (family): \$550

Registration @ \$25 per person	\$
Banquet @ \$21 per person	\$
AOS 2016 Dues	\$
DIBS Land Purchase Fund Contribution	\$
<b>TOTAL ENCLOSED</b>	\$

ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 1325  
DAUPHIN ISLAND, AL 36528

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### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Jane Allen  
Greg Harber  
Greg Jackson  
Carroll Pinckard

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Address correspondence concerning membership to:  
Rufina Ward, Treasurer  
1689 Longleaf Drive NW,  
Huntsville, AL 35806  
e-mail: phinken@wowway.com

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<http://www.coastalbirding.org>

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<http://www.fmwaudubon.org>

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<http://www.bamabirds.com>

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